

## **PERKHIDMATAN TADBIR DAN DIPLOMATIK (THE MALAYSIAN CIVIL SERVICE) – IN SERVICE OF THE NATION**

The Pangkor Engagement in 1872 led to the appointment of British Residents in Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang and their joining together to form the Federated Malay States in 1896.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century separate Civil Services administered the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States. However they increasingly come to be regarded as a single service with a common establishment.

The appointments in the Federated Malay States Cadet Service in 1900 were many and varied. Besides Resident General and British Residents there were the Commissioners of Land and Mines, Secretary for Chinese Affairs, Accountant and Auditor, Secretary to Government of Perak, Inspector of Schools, Assistant District Magistrates, District Magistrates and Senior Magistrates, Collector of Land Revenue and Registrar of Titles, Warden of Mines, Assistant District Officers and District Officers.

With the inclusion of Johor and four northern states under British suzerainty in 1910, a single service evolved providing an administrative cadre to serve both Malaya and Singapore.

In 1920 the British Secretary of State accepted recommendations that a single Malaya wide service should be recognized. The style Malayan Civil Service was formally adopted in January 1921 with a total establishment of 183 posts. The candidates for the post must be “natural-born British subjects of pure European descent on both sides”.

### **ADMISSION OF MALAYS INTO THE MCS**

The admission of Malays into the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) came in 1929 when the Government agreed that serving Malay officers could be promoted to the MCS for service in the Federated Malay States only. However, the intake was slow with promotion at the rate of two a year. At the end of January, 1941, of the 200 odd serving officers in the MCS, there were only 20 Malay officers.

## **THE JAPANESE INVASION**

Then came the invasion of Malaya by the Japanese on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1941. As the Japanese advanced the British withdrew gradually to Singapore. However as the British forces withdrew, they ordered the civilian officers in the civil administration to hold on to their posts until the last moments before they were allowed to vacate their offices. The Malay MCS officers complied fully with the order. Mahmud bin Mat, a Malay MCS officer, recalled that he left his post as the District Officer of Batang Padang at Tapah in Perak when the Japanese army were entering Ipoh, less than 60 kilometres to the north.

Of the 200 MCS officers at the beginning of the Japanese invasion 40 lost their lives during the war. Several were killed in action, some lost their lives in interment as prisoners of war and a few died at the brutal hand of the Kempeitai. Raja Aman Shah bin Raja Harun, who was then serving as District Officer, Port Dickson, was a captain in the FMS Volunteer Force and took part in the war. He was captured by the Japanese in the battle for Singapore in February 1942 and was brutally executed.

The capture of Malaya by the Japanese in February, 1942 left only the Malay MCS officers in the country. They were quickly tracked by the Japanese and were told to resume their duties immediately to organize the District administration in their old jobs as they placed great importance on the restoration of civil administration in order to preserve law and order. District administration was left entirely in the hands of the Malay members of the MCS and their MAS colleagues in the former FMS and State Civil Officers in the non-FMS states.

## **THE WATANIAH**

Some Malay officers who later held senior positions in the MCS and the Government joined the Wataniah, a highly disciplined and efficient force, which was formed by Lt. Col. Derek Headly, an MCS officer, who had been working in Palestine. He was dropped by parachute into the upper reaches of Ulu Tembeling in Ulu Pahang in 1945. The Wataniah was over 100 strong and was mostly recruited from Malay Government servants and villagers in the Raub area. After Headly moved to Kelantan it was taken over by Lt. Col. Richardson who was in the Survey Department. This force was officered by remarkable young MAS officers, Major Yeop Mahidin, Lieutenant Ibrahim bin Ali, Lieutenant Ghazali bin Shafie and Lieutenant Abdul Razak Hussein, who later became the second Prime Minister of Malaysia. One of their exploits was to waylay the Sultan of Pahang and take him into the jungle with them in case he should be used by the Japanese as a pawn in the surrender negotiations. On the surrender of the Japanese and before the arrival of British forces, the Wataniah preserved the law and order in Kuala Lipis and other nearby areas, preventing the looting and communal problems which occurred elsewhere in Pahang.

## **BRITISH MILITARY ADMINISTRATION**

Japan unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Forces in August, 1945 and Japan's official surrender ceremony to General Douglas Mac Arthur the Supreme Commander Allied Forces in the Pacific took place on 2 September, 1945 in Tokyo Bay on board the USS Missouri. On 3 September, Royal Marines from the British liberating expeditionary force landed in Penang heralding the arrival of the main liberating forces in Singapore on 5 September, 1945. With the arrival of the liberating force a British Military Administration was established pending the establishment of a civilian government. The British Military Administration ended on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1946.

## **THE MALAYAN UNION**

The nature of this new civilian government was announced by the British Government on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1945. It was to establish a Malayan Union. The formation of this new government was strongly opposed by the Malays. All the Malay Rulers boycotted the installation of the first Governor on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1946. The united Malay opposition culminated in the formation of the United Malays National Organization.

## **INVOLVEMENT OF MALAY OFFICERS IN THE MCS IN OPPOSING THE MALAYAN UNION**

Malay officers of the MCS played an important role in the establishment of UMNO and the opposition to the establishment of the Malayan Union. Zainal Abidin bin Haji Abas was a founder member of UMNO and was appointed Secretary-General of the organisation in 1947. Dato Hamzah bin Abdullah was appointed Financial Secretary of the organisation in 1947 and Deputy President in 1950. Megat Yunus bin Megat Mohamed Isa was appointed a member of the Political Affairs Committee. Ismail Ali was an Executive Committee member in 1950 and chaired the Committee on Economic Affairs and Rural Development. Others were Raja Ayub bin Raja Haji Bot who was appointed an Executive Committee member in 1950 and Bahaman bin Shamsudin who represented the Seremban Branch of the organisation. Bahaman later became an elected Member of Parliament and appointed Minister in the first Cabinet of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra.

Several Malay Administrative Service (MAS) and State Civil Service officers who later reached high positions in the MCS and the Government also took leading parts in the early days of UMNO. Abdul Jamil Rais, who became the second Chief Secretary to the Government, represented the Perlis State Branch at several general meetings of the organisation. Tunku Mohammad bin Tunku Besar Burhanuddin, who later became the third Chief Secretary to the Government, represented the Persekutuan Melayu Negeri Sembilan at every general meeting of UMNO and was elected Chairman of several of its general meetings. Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussein was duly elected Vice President (Youth). He later became the second Prime Minister of Malaysia. Hussein bin Dato' Onn, who was appointed MAS officer in 1946, was appointed Secretary for Youth Affairs in 1949, Vice President (Youth) in 1950 and Acting Secretary-General in 1950. He later became the third Prime Minister of Malaysia. Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, who was a member of the Kedah Civil Service and had just been appointed Deputy Public Prosecutor in Kuala Lumpur, represented UMNO Kedah at the General

meeting held in 1949. He led the country into independence and became its first Prime Minister. When Malaysia was formed, he became its first Prime Minister.

These officers were, of course, subjected to the Colonial Regulations that prohibited a civil servant from taking active part in politics, but the Malayan Union Government had made a dispensation. Malayan Union Secretariat Circular No. 2 of 1947 authorised Resident Commissioners and Heads of Departments to grant vacation leave to enable government officials who were Committee Members and delegates to attend UMNO Executive Committee meetings and General Assemblies.

## **FEDERATION OF MALAYA**

As a result of the strong opposition from the Malays, the British Government set up a committee to study a new constitution for the country. The Committee was made up of representatives of the Government, the Malay Rulers and UMNO. The Committee began its discussion on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1946 and completed its task on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1946. Its recommendations formed the basis of the Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948 which was signed on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1948 which led to the formation of the Federation of Malaya. The Federation of Malaya was officially established on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1948 replacing the short-lived Malayan Union.

The number of Malay officers in the MCS on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1946 during the period of the Malayan Union was 21 out of a total strength of MCS officers at 230. Of this 21, two had yet to report for duty. They were Ismail bin Mohd Ali and Mohd Suffian bin Hashim who were recruited directly by the British Government and became the first non-European officers recruited directly into the MCS. Ismail Ali was later appointed Assistant State Secretary, Selangor while Mohd Suffian bin Hashim as Harbour Master and Magistrate in Malacca. At the end of 1948, after the formation of the Federation of Malaya, there were 215 appointments in the MCS and of this number, 35 were held by Malays.

Under the constitution of the Federation of Malaya Resident Commissioners of the Malay States were to assume the appointment of British Advisers. The Administrative Head of the State Governments would be the Menteri Besar with the State Secretary as the chief administrative officers. Of the 21 Malay officers in the MCS in November, 1946 two became Menteri Besar. They were Mahmud bin Mat as Menteri Besar, Pahang and Abdul Malek bin Yusof as Menteri Besar, Negeri Sembilan. In addition Dato Hamzah bin Abdullah, who retired in January, 1941, was appointed Menteri Besar, Selangor. Six others were appointed as State Secretary. They were Raja Uda bin Raja Muhammad as State Secretary Selangor, Abu Samah bin Haji Ali as State Secretary Pahang, Ahmad bin Osman as State Secretary Perak, Kamaruddin bin Idris as State Secretary Terengganu, Othman bin Mohamed as State Secretary Negeri Sembilan and Osman bin Talib as State Secretary Perlis.

John M. Gullick, a former MCS officer, in his article dated 20th May, 2007 in the New Straits Times, commented that the British Residents, transmuted to be mere British Advisers, wrote privately to each other with the encouraging message that “They’ll never be able to cope. Within a month or two it will all be back in our hands.” It was to the credit of these Malay MCS officers and others appointed as Menteri Besar and State Secretary that it wasn’t the case as they were a determined and dedicated lot.

Gullick was a secretary to one of the Advisers who no longer received any file on which he could advise let alone decide. He protested and the Menteri Besar sent him just one file – the minutes of the state welfare committee.

## **THE MALAYAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE EMERGENCY**

The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) exploited the unsettled situation preceding the formation of the Malayan Union and later for its own cause to establish a Peoples' Democratic Republic of Malaya. It infiltrated the labour movement and Chinese organizations and organised rallies, processions and even strikes. It turned militant following the decision of the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee held on 17-21 March 1948 to abandon the policy of peaceful united front to return to the policy of armed struggle as carried out during the Japanese occupation. The decision of the Conference of World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Students Union held at Calcutta in February 1948 provided the impetus for this change of policy. A scheme was formulated "for the complete disruption of industry and administration and the establishment of liberated areas from which to maintain an effective paralysis of the Peninsula".

In May, 1948, four months after the establishment of the Federation of Malaya, the country was gripped by a rapidly growing lawlessness and terrorism incited by the MCP. A proclamation of a State of emergency was declared in the Sungei Siput area of Perak when terrorists murdered three European planters and in west-central Johor where three Chinese were also murdered by them on 16 June, 1948. As violence rapidly spread throughout the length and breadth of the country and as the situation worsened another proclamation was made on 12 July, 1948 declaring the State of Emergency for the whole of the Federation.

The establishment of the State of Emergency added a new dimension to the work and responsibility of MCS officers, especially those in the district administration. The administration was placed on a war footing with the establishment of War Executive Committees – the State War Executive Committee (SWEC) at State and Settlement level, presided by the Menteri Besar or the Resident Commissioner and the District War Executive Committee (DWEC) at district level, presided by the District Officer. These Committees were responsible for the strategic planning and execution of the fight against the Communist menace. A Federal War Council presided by the High Commissioner exercised overall direction.

## **THE WAR AGAINST THE CT**

The war against the Communist Terrorists (CT) was fought on two fronts – military front and the administrative front. On the military front the security forces hunted the CT especially on their suspected hideouts. On the administrative front the MCS officers in the district administration carried the brunt of the work, closely working with the military, police, information and Chinese Affairs officers. The District Officer chaired the meeting of DWEC, which at the height of the Emergency met every morning so much so it was called Morning Prayers, to review the operational situation and plan the next step and to coordinate operations. The District Officers and his Assistants were made responsible to implement the food denial scheme introduced as a measure of stopping food supply from reaching the CT.

The mineworkers, vegetable gardeners and others who lived in the jungle fringes, by force of circumstances, became the source of supply for food, medicines and other necessities to the CT. In 1949, Charles Howe, the District Officer of Jelebu, in Negeri Sembilan, introduced a resettlement scheme for these people. The scheme caught the attention of the Federal Government and the then Director of Operations, Lt. General Sir Harold Briggs, implemented the scheme nationwide. The scheme then became known as the Briggs Plan and half a million squatters were regrouped and resettled in what was called the New Villages.

The administration of these settlements, the execution and of the decisions of SWEC and DWEC, food denial operations, registration and issue of Identity Card, formed a new dimension in the duties and responsibilities of the DO and his officers at the District Office.

Michael Codner, whose exploits escaping from a German Prisoner of War camp during World War II had become the story of a famous book called “The Wooden Horse” and subsequently made into a film of the same title, was a MCS officer and an Assistant District Officer, Tanjung Malim in 1952. On 25 March of that year he bravely and perhaps rather unwisely went to investigate a CT incident damaging the water supply main to Tanjung Malim and walked into a pre-arranged ambush by the CT. He together with Public Works Executive Engineer, a Technical Assistant and several Jungle Squad policemen escorting the party were killed in the ambush.

The MCS officers gained invaluable experience serving under such a difficult and risky situation and the military operational style and administration taught them to carefully plan and effectively execute operations, cut red tapes and make quick decisions and above all to be out in the field to assess situations and needs, first hand. The “Operation Room” style of administration was the basis of development work in the independent Federation of Malaya later.

Three years after the Emergency began, the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, was killed in a road ambush by the CT on his way to Frasers Hill in October, 1951.

The Emergency lasted for twelve long years and its end was officially declared on 31 July, 1960. During the Emergency 2,400 civilian and 2,000 members of the security forces lost their lives and 6,000 CT were killed.

## **THE ROAD TO MERDEKA**

The Preamble to the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948 stated that the establishment of the Federation was the result of the expediency that the Malay States, the Settlement of Penang and the Settlement of Malacca should be formed into a Federation with a strong central government and also of the desire “that progress should be made towards eventual self government”.

In April 1951 the ‘Member’ system of government was introduced. Under this system government departments were grouped and placed under the responsibility of designated members of the Federal of the Federal Legislative Council. It was a step towards a ministerial system of Government. 9 portfolios were established viz. Member for Home Affairs, Member of Economic Affairs, Secretary of Defence, Secretary for Chinese Affairs, Member for Agriculture and Forestry, Member of Health, Member for Education, Member for Industrial and Social Relations, Member for Lands, Mines and Communications, Member for Works and Housing and Member for Railways and Posts.

With the establishment of the Member system the designation of Chief Secretary was changed to Secretary to Government and senior MCS appointments were established to serve the office of members as Secretaries to Members.

The Colonial Office stressed again this policy of promoting political progress which in due course making a Malaya a fully self-governing nation in a directive dated 7 February 1952 to General Sir Gerald Templer who succeeded Sir Henry Gurney. On 16 February 1952 for the first time an election was held to contest the 12 elected seats in the Kuala Lumpur Municipality. An Alliance of UMNO and MCA (Malayan Chinese Association) contested the election and won 9 of the seats contested. The success of the cooperation between UMNO and MCA led to a wider collaboration to include the MIC (Malayan Indian Congress) which represented the Malaysians of Indian origin. The UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance was further strengthened in later years and developed into the National Front, which continued to win election after election.

## **ENTRY OF NON-MALAYS INTO THE MCS**

On 13 March 1953 it was announced by the Government that the formula agreed in to in the selection for the appointment to the MCS was in the ration 4 to 1 favour of the Malays. The earliest appointments of non Malays into the MCS were W. Fernando from the Information Service (1.1.1953), Yeap Kee Aik from the Transport Department (1.1.1953), Liew Sip Hon from the Immigration Department (1.3.1954), N. Jegathesan (direct recruitment – 27.9.1954), Thong Yaw Hong (direct recruitment – September 1954), G. K. Rama Iyer (direct recruitment – September, 1955) and Chong Hong Nyan from the Settlements Civil Service (1.12.1955).

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE**

Preparation for the establishment of the Federation's own Foreign Service began in 1954 when an External Affairs Division was established in Secretary to the Government's office. Two officers were selected for training as future Foreign Service officers. They were Mohamad Ghazali bin Shafie (promoted to the MCS on 22 November 1951) and Zaiton bin Ibrahim (promoted to the MCS on 1 January 1952). The Malayan External Affairs Service was established on 1 February 1957 but the following officers were before hand appointed in July and August 1956 – Tunku Jaafar ibni Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Kamaruddin bin Mohd. Ariff, Zakaria bin Haji Ali, Abdullah bin Ali, Tengku Ngah Mohamad bin Tengku Seri Akar, Raja Aznam bin Raja Haji Ahmad, Hashim bin Sultan, Lim Teck Choon and Hussein bin Mohamad Osman.

## **MALAYANISATION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

Rapid Malayisation of the Public Service was placed in the forefront of the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance election manifesto in 1955. When the Alliance won the election and formed the Government the Chief Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, in September, 1955 established a Committee of Ministers under his Chairmanship "to review and report on the progress in Malayisation of the Public Service and to recommend such additional measures as may be necessary to achieve satisfactory progress in the future.

The position of officers in Division 1 of the Public Service then was as follows:

Total establishment	3,000
Number of Malaysians	850
Number of Expatriates	1,800
Number of posts vacant	350

Tunku Abdul Rahman felt that critical posts should continue to be held by existing officers until suitably qualified Malaysian could take over from them. As he said it in 1956, "We have all the time at our disposals to replace expatriate officers with our own very own. Let us do it without losing our heads and our reasons".

The programme drawn up was for the Malayisation was for departments with small number of expatriate officers to be completely Malayised by 1 July, 1960 and where the number was completely large was to be fully Malayised by 1965.

The MCS, with an establishment of 355 consisted of 222 expatriate officers, 122 Malayan offices and 45 vacancies at the end of 1955 was projected to be fully Malayised by 1962. The Service was fully Malayised only by the end of 1963.

On the Malayisation programme Gullick recently commented: "I thought the Malayisation Committee struck the right balance. By the early 1960s, the changeover had been completed without any decline in the quality of the service".

## **GENERAL ELECTION OF 1955 AND MERDEKA**

Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, the President of UMNO obtained the support of the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance to press the government for a general election countrywide and set January 1954 as target date for the general election as the life of the then existing Federal Legislative Council would end by then. The government showed little interest in the proposal causing him to take up the matter right to London where he led his team consisting of UMNO and MCA members to meet with Oliver Lyttleton, the Secretary of State for the Colonies to demand for the early implementation of Clause 65 of the Federation of Malaya Agreement for the election of members to the Federal Legislative Council. The team returned home with a letter from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner but failed to obtain the agreement of the latter. He gave way on the threat of a boycott of the Legislative Council by unofficial members. A meeting on board the British naval ship H.M.S. Ajax at the Singapore Naval Base settled the question of official representations in the proposed elected Legislative Council. It was agreed that the general election would be held in July 1955 after the end of the current session of the existing nominated Council. On 1 March 1955 the Election announced that the election to the Federal Legislative Council would be held on 27 July 1955. The Alliance of UMNO-MCA-MIC led by Tunku Abdul Rahman fielded 52 candidates for all the seats contested. The Alliance won all but one of the seats contested. Tunku Abdul Rahman was appointed Chief Minister and formed his first Cabinet.

The post of Secretary to Minister was established to serve each Ministry and to be responsible for the administration of the departments under its portfolio.

The Alliance Government under Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra made it quite clear that it desired further constitutional advance at an early stage. When the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd, visited the Federation in August 1955, he held discussions with the Rulers and with the Alliance Ministers on the next step to be taken in the direction of self-government for the Federation. The discussions resulted in the agreement that a conference should be held in London in early 1956 “to discuss the future relations which should exist between Her Majesty’s Governments, Their Highnesses the Rulers and the Government of the Federation...” The conference in London agreed that full self-government and independence for the Federation of Malaya within the Commonwealth by 31 August 1957.

On the stroke of midnight on 30 August 1957 the Union Jack was lowered for the last time and the Federation flag was raised at the Selangor Club Padang and the Proclamation of Independence was read by the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman in A ceremony in the newly completed Stadium Merdeka on the morning of 31 August 1957.

Abdul Aziz bin Haji Abdul Majid was appointed Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister’s Department, the Secretary to the Cabinet, the Head of the Civil Service and leader to his colleagues in the MCS.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF MALAYSIAN HOME AND FOREIGN SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE AND DIPLOMATIC SERVICE**

In 1966 the Malaysian Civil Service and the External Affairs Service was abolished and in their places was established the Malaysian Home and Foreign Service. The name was changed to Administrative and Diplomatic Service in 1972.

## **THE ROLE OF MCS OFFICERS AFTER MERDEKA**

Over the years since Merdeka the MCS officers continue their active and important role in the administration and development of the country. Their number has increased considerably since Merdeka.

It is fitting to end these reminiscences on the role and activities of the MCS preceding independence and thereafter to reflect that many of them attain high positions in the government and the private sector. Duli Yang Maha Mulia Tuanku Jaafar bin Tuanku Abdul Rahman became the Yang DiPertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan on 18 April, 1967 and became the 10<sup>th</sup> Yang DiPertuan Agung from 1994 to 1999. Duli Yang Amat Mulia Raja Jaafar ibni Raja Muda Musa became Raja Di Hilir Perak.

Four other MCS officers became Yang DiPertua Negeri of the state of Malacca viz. Tun Abdul Malek bin Yusuf (1963-1971), Tun Abdul Aziz bin Haji Abdul Majid (1971-1975), Tun Syed Zahiruddin bin Syed Hassan (1975-1984) and Tun Datuk Seri Utama Mohd. Khalil bin Yaacob (since 2004). Raja Tun Uda Al-Haj bin Raja Muhammad became the first Yang DiPertua Negeri of the state of Pulau Pinang (1957-1967).

Y.A.B. Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi is now the 5<sup>th</sup> and current Prime Minister of Malaysia. Several others have become Ministers and Menteri Besar. Tun Mohamad Suffian bin Hashim became the Lord President of the Federal Court (1974-1982), Tun Ismail bin Mohamed Ali became the first Governor of Bank Negara and Raja Tun Mohar bin Raja Badiozaman was Special Economic Adviser to three Prime Ministers – Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussein, Tun Hussein bin Dato' Onn and Datuk Seri (now Tun) Mahathir bin Mohamad. He was also Malaysian Airline System Chairman from 1973 to 1991 and played a big role in establishing Malaysia's diplomatic relations with China.

By Dato' Seri Mohamed Khalil bin Haji Hussein, PTD, SPMP, KMN

Note : This article was written in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of Merdeka and in conjunction with the preparation of the video presentation during the Jamuan Gemilang 2008 on 24th April 2008.